

## **UC Berkeley**

### **Cal-in-Sac Undergraduate Research on Diversity and Entrepreneurship**

#### **Title**

Party Planning Businesses You Absolutely Need to Know About

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# CAL-IN-SACRAMENTO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, FALL 2021 DIVERSITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CALIFORNIA

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*Title:* Party Planning Businesses You Absolutely Need to Know About  
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In the spring of 2021, IGS launched a two-year Diversity and Entrepreneurship Fellowship Program. Cal-in-Sac Fellows conducted original research focused on the challenges and opportunities facing women- and POC-owned small businesses and diverse entrepreneurs in California. This series includes Op-Eds, blogs, policy briefs and other research products that capture key findings of the students' research. Learn more at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/matsui-center/fellowships/cal-in-sacramento>.

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## Party Planning Businesses You Absolutely Need to Know About

As news outlets began covering the gravity of COVID-19 in the early months of 2020, birthday parties, weddings, graduations, and nearly every other celebration and gathering was postponed indefinitely. By early March, Orange County, Los Angeles County, and Riverside County had declared a state of emergency, requiring all events and gatherings to be postponed until further notice. For business owners in the event planning industry, this turn of events, and the ensuing uncertainty, was especially devastating. Individuals who depended on parties and large gatherings as sources of income were suddenly thrust into financial hardships which transformed into mental health challenges.

I interviewed two Latinx, female owned businesses operating within Orange County, Los Angeles County, and Riverside County to better understand their experiences navigating 2020 both financially and mentally.

### *Mad-nificent Balloons:*

Mad-nificent Balloons, a Riverside County based small business, specializes in balloon garlands and balloon walls. Before the pandemic, Madison, the owner of Mad-nificent Balloons, mainly created balloon arrangements for large celebrations such as birthday parties, graduations, etc. However, Madison shared that she had no choice but to take several months off work in 2020 because there were no events due to rising COVID-19 cases. Madison shared that the several

months out of work was exceedingly stressful because of the drastic financial losses she accrued over the course of 2020 and well into 2021.



challenges navigating a small business during a pandemic were not enough, Madison herself contracted COVID-19 during 2020. Now, as she hopes to pick up where her business left off all those months ago, Madison is more weary than ever about both her mental and physical health.

As events have slowly begun to pick back up, Madison shared that she often has trouble finding the supplies she was once able to easily attain; moreover, if she does find the supplies she needs, she often has to wait longer for shipping times and pay substantial amounts more for the same products. Madison shared that all these new financial challenges lead to heightened stress and she has begun to worry about the toll the pandemic is taking on her mental health. As if the



*DeeLuxe Florista:*

Similar to countless other businesses across Southern California, DeeLuxe Florista, a floral arrangement company operating predominantly in Orange County, had to dramatically change their business model due to the pandemic. Diana, the owner of DeeLuxe Florista, shared that she too had challenges navigating the mental health challenges associated with being a small business owner amidst a pandemic. Since the pandemic, Diana has had to shift from making picnic table arrangements for parties with small floral arrangements, to larger, individual arrangements. Diana shared that her picnic table idea was originally supposed to be an aesthetic photo opportunity at larger events where she could decorate an area with her flowers and other arrangements.



However, as Orange County and Los Angeles County placed restrictions on public gatherings, this idea has been placed on the “backburner”, forcing her to get creative with other floral arrangements.

Unfortunately, Diana also shared that finding flowers has become a challenge after the pandemic since the supply is simply not available like it was before. Likewise, the cost of her supplies has increased post-lockdown as well, cutting into her profits substantially. Due to all these changes, Diana stated that she has needed to emphasize her mental health more than before. Afraid that the added stress of operating a business during the pandemic could become physical health ailments, Diana shared that she finds herself spending more time focusing on her wellbeing. Unfortunately, prioritizing her wellbeing is not always easy given all the financial stressors the business provides.

*So what can we do?*

Clearly, the challenges women face in the workforce are grueling. The adversity facing women of color especially only adds to these challenges. Small businesses owned by women of color, such as Diana and Madison, need more support than ever as the state seeks to move past the COVID-19 pandemic. As both women shared, the prices of supplies increased dramatically, cutting into the profits these businesses once accrued. All these financial barriers are leading to enhanced stress, anxiety, and depression. As we look to the future, the fate of COVID-19 is still uncertain, meaning the challenges small businesses face, and their ensuing impact on mental health, is a concern the state must address. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we support small businesses owned and operated by women of color.